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U-2 Pilot Gets Medal From CIA

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In a secret ceremony, the Central Intelligence Agency last month awarded a secret medal to Francis Gary Powers, the U-2 pilot whose crash on May 1, 1960 deep inside the Soviet Union, shook the world—and caused a good deal of anguish to the CIA.

The summit meeting in Paris collapsed in the wake of the U-2 uproar. The affair chilled East-West relations and ended any meaningful contact between President Eisenhower and then Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev.

Powers, officially a test pilot in Burbank, Calif., for the Lockheed Aircraft Corp., manufacturer of the U-2, received the CIA medal in a ceremony about two weeks ago at the intelligence agency's headquarters in Langley, Va.

Like the ceremony, the medal is secret. Powers is not supposed to tell anybody about it. He is not supposed to wear it. In fact, it is sort of an invisible medal.

Certainly CIA isn't talking about it. "No comment at all," a CIA spokesman said.

However, it was reliably learned that the secret medal was awarded at a ceremony attended by several top officials of the CIA.

At least two mysteries remain:

Why CIA wanted to bestow an award on its most famous employee—one who brought the agency under the public and scrutiny, why CIA waited five years to do so.

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